


ITALIAN STUDIES

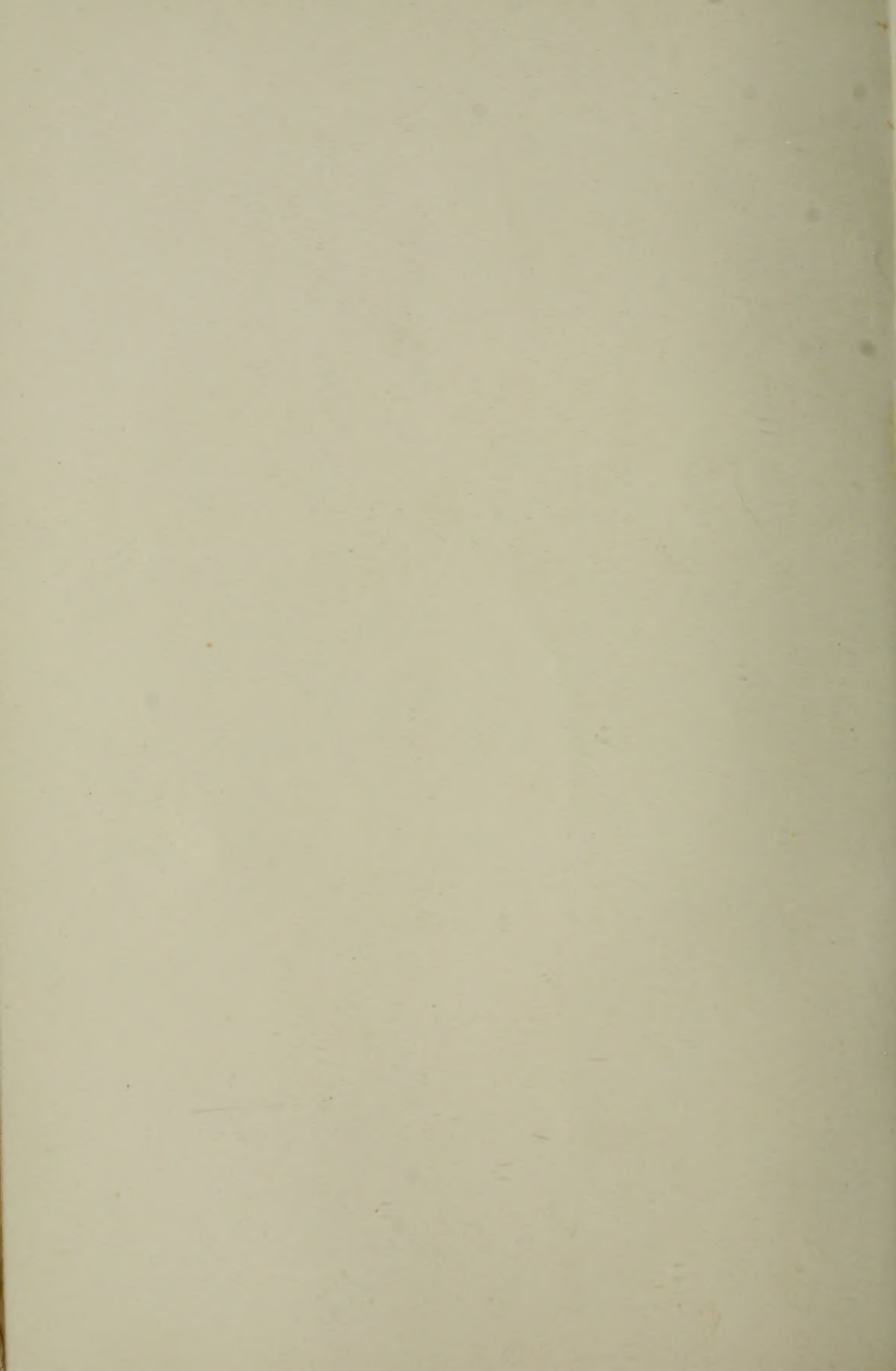
Their place in modern
education

An inaugural address
by THOMAS OKEY
Professor of Italian
in the University
of Cambridge

CAMBRIDGE 1919



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AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS

BY

THOMAS OKEY

PROFESSOR OF ITALIAN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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It is impossible, indeed it would be unseemly, to begin this, the first lecture given from a chair of Italian in our country, without sincerely thanking the Vice-Chancellor and the electors of this venerable University for honouring me with their choice.

It is a great honour, a great privilege, and—a great responsibility. And I am sure you will believe me when I say that I have not dared to shoulder this charge without many searchings of heart, for I come among you naked of all academic vesture and from a social status rarely represented in your chairs.

But I may perhaps take courage from the conviction that I stand before you less as a person than as a symbol—that your choice is due not so much to my own claims as to the fact of my association for the past thirty years with a

small group of friends of Italy and students of her modern history such as Bolton King, and George Macaulay Trevelyan—students who have sought to understand her ideals and her difficulties; to chronicle her successes and to interpret them to the English reading public so that the sentimental and artistic attractions of her past may be fortified by a comprehension of her present conditions, and that the bonds between our respective nations may be knit closer by an apprehension of her spiritual, literary, political and social aims and achievements.

Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore.

I enter on my duties as an admirer, a friend of Italy—but not as a flatterer; for have I not been reproached in high places, political and diplomatic, with having been a too *candid* friend of Italy? Nor would it be fitting to proceed without grateful acknowledgement of the generosity, the munificence, the enlightened public spirit, of the founder of this chair, Mr Arthur Serena; the founder not only

of this, but of a similar chair in the sister university of Oxford, and the giver of lavish help to a chair of Italian in the metropolis of industrial England. By these magnificent endowments Mr Serena will have established seats of learning in this country which should bear lasting results in cementing the Anglo-Italian Entente and in giving an impulse to modern Latin culture sadly needed among us.

Mr Serena is himself an incarnation of the political and social rapprochement of our two nations. He is a son of that Venetian, exiled among us, who was the confidant and private secretary of one of the noblest figures of the Italian Risorgimento—Daniel Manin—the head of the Venetian Republic of '48, whose glorious but brief existence was quenched in blood and fire by the Austrians in 1849.

My interpretation of the charge laid upon me is that you desire to give an initial impulse to Italian studies here in a modern direction while derogating

nothing from the lofty position always held in Cambridge by the Italian Classics, and especially by Dante. No one who has grasped what Italian literature has meant to English poetry and English culture from the time when Chaucer left these shores for Italy and Milton returned ; from the day when the poet Gray crossed the Alps, to the days of Byron, of Leigh Hunt, of Keats, of Shelley, of Swinburne, of the Brownings, and of Meredith—no one I say can desire for a moment to depreciate the study of the Italian Classics.

Let me repeat that no depreciation, no subordination even, of Dante and the classics to modern Italian studies is intended. That would be as inept as to neglect or depreciate Shakespeare in a chair of English at an Italian university: *the studies are complementary.*

Now according to Dante it is not lawful for a man to speak of himself, nor do the rhetoricians concede the right of a man so to speak except under occasions

of necessity. And of these, one is that by discoursing of himself instruction may follow to others. Let me then venture to say that I found my knowledge of modern Italian idiom of no small advantage in translating Dante for the Temple Classics, and I well remember one of my colleagues in the task remarking that certain readings I had given had brought him up against deficiencies in his own interpretation that arose from a lack of acquaintance with colloquial Italian and a too great reliance on classical erudition.

But the importance of Dante to the English student, as compared with that of our Shakespeare to the Italian, is far greater. No classic in the literature of any modern country possesses the same vital relation to its history, the same sanctity, the same inspiration, the same meaning. The tale of the editions of the *Divina Commedia* during the centuries forms a barometer of Italian learning and patriotism. Between 1600 and 1700, the darkest days of Italian political and liter-

ary decadence; the days when petty, puerile criticism, quaint conceits, *facetie* and *novelle*, absorbed men's minds in sterile discussion in the five hundred academies spread all over Italy; the days when—as Milton said in 1638—nothing had been written in Italy but flattery and fustian—during this decadent century I say only three editions of the *Divina Commedia* were published in the whole of Italy. Between 1700 and 1800 thirty-one editions were published and those mostly towards the close of the century. But in the nineteenth century and only up to the year 1894 three hundred and sixteen editions issued from the Italian press.

And this eighteenth century neglect of Dante had its parallel in our country. The vicissitudes of literary and artistic taste are astounding—astounding and disconcerting. Here is a letter written by a famous literary pundit in 1750.

My dear Friend,

You have by this time, I hope and believe, made such progress in the Italian language that you

can read it with ease; I mean the easy books in it; and indeed in that, as well as in every other language, the easiest books are generally the best; for whatever author is obscure and difficult in his own language certainly does not think clearly.

This is, in my opinion, the case of a celebrated Italian author, to whom the Italians, from the admiration they have of him, have given the epithet of *il divino*, I mean Dante. Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well, I could never understand him; for which reason I had done with him, fully convinced that he was not worth the pains necessary to understand him.... The two poets worth your reading, and, I was going to say, the only two, are Tasso and Ariosto.

The writer of that letter was Lord Chesterfield. But a greater than he, the acknowledged literary autocrat of France, Voltaire, in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, thus turns down Dante:

Vous voulez connaître le Dante? The Italians call him divine. But he is a hidden divinity. Few folk understand his oracles. There are commentators—which perhaps is another reason why he is not understood. His reputation will continue to grow because he is but little read. There are about a score of passages which one knows by heart and that suffices to spare one the trouble of examining the rest.

Curiously enough it is now the fashion in Italy, and has been since the rise of the

Nationalists in Florence, for the young literary lions of that party to decry Dante's writings as the foetid emanations of a stagnant marsh of medieval superstitions and rancours over which there flashes from time to time a fine verse or two : they are a hunting preserve of obscure subtleties, a delicious pasture for the asinine erudition of innumerable herds of pedants.

Such however is not the attitude of the mass of Italian democrats to-day, as exemplified in a recent issue of their leading organ in Italy—*Il Secolo*.

Our Dante, whom we love and venerate (says the writer) as the herald of the new Italy is the poet, not of a faction, nor of an age, but of the nation ; a mind wherein the most lofty energies of our race seemed to centre, there to be tempered and acquire a voice and potency throughout the centuries. Dante is he whose voice was to sound a warning and prophetic note to all our people in the days of darkness, and his faith was revealed to us by Ugo Foscolo and Giuseppe Mazzini.

This passage had hardly been written when the crisis at Paris evoked one of

the most impressive manifestations of Italian solidarity with regard to the problem of Fiume—a solemn pilgrimage of immense proportions to the tomb of Dante at Ravenna, over which hangs the silver lamp offered to that shrine of Italian aspirations in 1865 by the five unredeemed Italian cities, Trieste, Gorizia, Pola, Zara, Fiume. They are represented as weeping and an inscription runs: *Oleum lucet fovet ignem.*

But apart from Dante I shall hope to prove how intimate is the relation, from Parini to D'Annunzio, between Italian literature and modern Italian history. Ladies and Gentlemen, ideals precede revolutions and books come before battles. You cannot understand the Italian Risorgimento without studying its literature—Alfieri, Leopardi, Giusti, Gioberti, D'Azeglio and, greatest of all, Mazzini, the *Logos* of the movement. Yes. In the beginning was the word and the word sprang up armed men. Whenever, as we saw in the fateful days of May 1915, the

Italian people are called to face a tremendous issue and make a supreme decision in their fate, it is to the prophetic shade of Dante, it is to the radiant figure of Mazzini, with their imperishable idealisms, that they instinctively turn.

The way the Dante tradition and classic literature are woven in with, have inter-penetrated the very fabric of Italian life, is remarkable. Here is a little ballad sold for a penny in the streets of Florence and Siena reciting the sad story of Pia dei Tolomei. And who was Pia dei Tolomei? She is the subject of one of the most pathetic episodes in Dante's *Purgatorio*. She lived and met her tragic fate seven centuries ago. The ballad is composed by an unlettered Florentine in *ottava rima*.

Now this aspect of Italian life is a sealed book to the modern traveller. When I am journeying in Italy so far as possible I travel third class. It is so much more interesting. I well remember some years ago when travelling out of Siena

the train pulled up at a small station about five miles from the city; a station named *Arbia*. A line from Dante flashed into my memory—*Arbia*, the river that ran red with blood when the Sieneſe inflicted the crushing defeat on the Florentine Guelphs at Montaperti in 1260. I made some remark to an Italian of the people who ſat oppoſite. His eyes brightened and at once he repeated the line from the *Inferno*—*Che fece l' Arbia colorata in roſſo*.

If the rhetoricians will allow, I may perhaps relate a ſimilar experience that happened to me when riding from Prato to Florence on a ſteam tramcar. The incident will prove how a modern Italian classic, the *Promessi Sposi*, has ſimilarly entwined itſelf around Italian popular conſciouſneſs. We ſtopped at a wayside halt. A pariſh prieſt and his old houſekeeper entered. My neighbour, a man of the people, remarked to me as they paſſed along the car, *Guardi, Signore! Una vera ſcena dei Promessi Sposi. Ecco Perpetua: ecco Don Abbondio!*

May I plead then for some interest in modern Italy and her people? Medieval, renaissance and modern Italian history and literature are great subjects: they will occupy our studies. But the living, toiling, aspiring people—they too are a great subject and there are forty millions of them. In another generation there will be fifty or sixty millions. Huxley once characterised the Italian mind as the finest intellectual instrument in Europe. Well, I say that the results of the application of this instrument to problems of modern life, to philosophy, to letters, to science, is too little known in this country, with the result that grave misconceptions of Italian ideals, aims, temperament, mental texture, have arisen among us which the establishment of chairs such as this I now hold is designed to remove. The Italian intellect is essentially logical, synthetic, philosophic. The orderly, lucid, Latin mind is quick to seize the relations of things and the sequence of facts and events. It is in

striking contrast to our empiric, hand-to-mouth, one-angel-one-message mental habit, impatient of general principles.

While capable of self-sacrifice, Italian idealism is qualified by a firm grasp of practical possibilities. The Italian sees things in a clear, precise, hard, light, hard as the outline of the Apennines under the pellucid Italian sky. Proud, sensitive, recalcitrant under patronage he is determined to *fare da sè*. He has learned to be tolerant, even sceptical ; for his race is an ancient one. During its thrice millennial course it has known many disillusiones, witnessed many vicissitudes of mortal things—*Itala gente da le molte vite*. The Italian is never bemused by misty sentiment or foggy mentality. He may be moved by rhetoric, but by sentimentality—never. I am tempted to repeat an illustrative story. On the morrow of the calamitous earthquake in Sicily in 1908 I chanced to be travelling from Naples to Genoa and on entering my hotel I made some remarks to the chambermaid as she showed me

to my room on the horrors of the catastrophe—the tens of thousands of poor souls plunged in a moment into eternity. *Sì*, said she. *Ma ; bisogna dire che siamo troppi in Italia. È difficile la vita*¹. Now it was not in the least that the dear creature lacked compassion. It was that the quick, logical, Italian mind at once grasped the relation of the disaster to competition among chambermaids.

This by the way. I sometimes ponder and ask myself, Is this mental antinomy between the English and the Latin due to race, or is it not partly referable to education? While in England down to the fourth decade of the nineteenth century universities could be counted on two fingers Italy has for centuries had nearly a score. In the last published *Annuario* (1915) there figure seventeen state and four independent universities; three university schools attached to secondary schools; fourteen higher university institutes; thirteen special higher

¹ I must say there are too many of us in Italy. It's hard to get a living.

institutes. And, let this be remembered, Italian universities are the people's universities : they have never been the appanage of a class. In one aspect however Italy *is* a young nation—a *very* young nation, industrially. And she is a nation relatively poor in natural resources. Her subsoil is void of those minerals—coal and iron—that make the prosperity of modern nations. You know the Italy our poets have sung, the Italy our artists have painted—Italy the garden of the world, whose very weeds are beautiful, whose waste is more rich than other climes' fertility ; where plenty leaps to laughing life. It is an Italian land of fatness, laughing with corn and fig, and wine and oil—a land of golden-hued orange trees glowing in the sunlight and lemon groves laden with cooling fruit ; of happy contadini dancing in the sun-steeped fields or resting picturesquely under vine-clad pergolas loaded with luscious grapes.

Ah ! How different is the real Italy

to those of us who know her toiling people. Italy is *not* naturally a fertile land. With one-third mountain—you are never out of sight of mountains in Italy—and south of the Tiber no great rivers, her terraces, her fertile fields have been created by human toil. Pellagra and malaria are ever-present scourges; untamed torrents ravage her soil, or summer droughts wither her fields; earthquakes and volcanic eruptions periodically leave ruin and desolation in their train. Yet, in spite of these physical and economic disabilities her sons have made such strides in industrial production as to evoke the envy of older competitors in the race. I wonder how many among you know that the 6000 H.P. turbines installed at the Falls of Niagara were manufactured at Milan. Volta, Galvani, Marconi, we know; but how many know that the telephone was invented by an Italian in 1851¹ and that long distance transmission of electric

¹ See the *Nuova Antologia*, October 16, 1918.

power has been rendered possible by an Italian invention? To me when descending the Alps into Northern Italy the arresting sight is less the landscape than the long line of powerful standards bearing the hydro-electric forces from alpine torrents to feed the great centres of manufacturing Italy. Italian economists foresee a considerable expansion of trade and industry after the peace and it will be less the fault of Italy than of the defect of Italian studies here—I do not mean merely the language—if the commercial relations between our respective countries do not assume large proportions. Material obstacles of transit have now been removed by the working of the Channel steam-ferry and the generous reduction of rates on the French railways.

True, some advance has been made in our conception of modern Italians since the father of the English novel divided his characters into “men, women and Italians,” since Dickens’ Signor Cavalletto in *Little Dorrit* who lived in Bleeding

Heart Yard. Too long the British traveller has regarded Italy as an open air South Kensington, a land of museums and picture galleries and classical antiquities; and if he thinks of modern Italy at all associates it with ugly statues of Victor Emanuel on an impossible horse and its history with Garibaldi and a red shirt.

Here is George Eliot writing from Florence in 1860: "of course Victor Emanuel stares at us at every turn but we care more for the doings of Giotto and Brunelleschi than for those of Count Cavour."

I take from the shelves of your university library a volume of Grant Allen's Historical Guides to Italy. The historical cicerone is guiding us to the Castello in Milan—Milan the city of the Five Days. "We pass by the porter without entering the National Museum for which he offers us tickets and which *having to do only with the recent life of Italy as a nation and with Garibaldi and Victor Emanuel has no interest for us.*"

Why, the story of Garibaldi's Expedition of the Thousand is almost a fabulous one. Nothing like it has ever been recorded in history ancient or modern. It is of the stuff that legends are made of and great epics sung. Had it taken place in ancient Greece or Rome it would be as familiar to every public schoolboy of to-day as the defeat of Xerxes or the march of the Ten Thousand Greeks under Xenophon.

Now it is precisely this utter alienation from living Italy on the part of our travelling countrymen that is responsible for an irritation which is pretty general among patriotic Italians. For it is no use concealing the fact. We are not *simpatico*—an untranslatable word—to the Italian people. Our native reserve, our mutism, our lack of social expansiveness render us antipathetic.

I have even heard this type of traveller speak of "lazy Italians." Why, the Italian labourer is known to contractors as one who does the greatest amount of

effective work for the smallest pay of any labourer in the world. He it is who, with blood and sweat, has pierced the mountain chains and dug the harbours of Europe. He who will reap the corn at home under the fierce Italian sun, then cross to the southern hemisphere huddled in the storage of an emigrant ship to garner yet another harvest in the burning plains of the Argentine. And the Italian woman ! I have never seen such *corvées* of work performed as those by Italian women in the olive grounds of Southern Italy for a few soldi a day. We talk, says P. L. Courier, of working like a nigger : we should rather say working like a freeman. For nearly four years the Italian labourer has fought the common enemy ; he has won the most decisive battle : he has inflicted the most crushing military defeat in the whole course of the war. Italians have suffered—they are even now suffering—privations of which we have no conception with that patient endurance, that admirable

mansuetude which is so characteristic of their race.

Let me read to you the army figures for the year 1917.

Workmen and Labourers called to arms :

Industry and Commerce	326,408
Employees	56,535
Artizans	387,141
Agricultural labourers	1,656,229
Various and unqualified labourers . . .	406,106
Total Labourers	<u>2,832,419</u>

But to return to Italian studies :—one word of comfort I am able to give to intending students of Italian. There is no language in Europe which it is so easy for a foreigner to win compliments in from natives as the Italian. And the reason is simple. The Italian language although spoken everywhere and by everybody throughout Italy is coloured by native dialect and is not generally used as an intimate, homely, domestic mother tongue. You cannot tell a *Bonne Histoire* in Italian. You cannot imagine

a *Pickwick Papers* in Italian ; you can perfectly well in Venetian, or Milanese, or Neapolitan, or Sicilian or other dialect. Italian dialects are not patois. They have their literature, their grammar, their dictionaries—Venetian-Italian, Milanese-Italian, Sicilian-Italian, Sardinian-Italian. You will find them on your library shelves. Indeed, so widely different, so characteristic is the conjugation of the Sardinian verbs that Meyer-Lübke devotes a separate section to them in his *Italienische Grammatik*. Many educated Italians have confessed to me certain limitations in using Italian in familiar, intimate conversation ; and I well remember how surprised I was at hearing a well-known Venetian authoress, to whom I had been referred for sources of information on social conditions in preparing *Italy Today*, say “I will give you an introduction to Professor ——— for he speaks Italian.” Herself, she added, could not write poetry in Italian. A Venetian meeting a Venetian, or a

Neapolitan his compatriot, naturally falls into dialect when in familiar conversation. In fact, some educational authorities advocate the use of elementary school books in dialect to facilitate elementary instruction.

You will find an illustration of this relative advantage which a foreigner enjoys in Alfieri's *Vita*. Those who have read that remarkable Autobiography will remember the years of effort the author, a Piedmontese, underwent to *spiemontizzarsi* and acquire a literary knowledge of Italian. At twenty years of age, after his academic and university career, Alfieri was unable to understand the Italian quotations in Montaigne's *Essais* without the help of the French notes. He tells us how he envied the Countess of Albany for the rapidity with which she, a foreigner, acquired a perfect knowledge of Italian both in speech and in reading. She spoke it, he says, with a much better pronunciation than Italian women did, who all of them, whether they were

Lombards, or Venetians, or Neapolitans, one in one manner, one in another, lacerated the ears of everybody who was used to the soft and ringing Tuscan accent. The relations between Alfieri and the Countess of Albany are of course well known and it may be said that any speech from a mistress' lips is sweet to a lover's ears, but here is the sober lexicographer, Petrocchi, declaring that *in Italia si pronunzia assai male*. And here let me explain. A Tuscan speaking Italian is one thing: a Tuscan speaking any of the Tuscan dialects is quite another. From the days when Dante wrote the first treatise on philology—the *De Vulgare Eloquentia*—to the *Idioma Gentile* of Edmondo de Amicis, Italian scholars have discussed and disputed as to what is the Italian language. In the xv and xvi centuries Tuscan purists harked back to Boccaccio for their model and Baldassarre Castiglione in his *Cortegiano* defends himself at great length from those who reprove him, a Lombard,

for not having imitated Boccaccio or even contemporary Tuscan.

“Since,” he writes, “the force and rule of speech doth consist more in use than in anything else it is not meet I should use many words that are in Boccaccio, which in his time were used and now are out of use among the Tuscans themselves. Neither would I bind myself to the manner of the Tuscan tongue in use now-a-days; because the practising among sundry nations hath always been of force to transport from one to another, as merchandise, so also new words, which afterward remain or decay according as they are admitted by custom, or refused. And because in mine opinion the kind of speech of other noble cities of Italy, where there resort men of wisdom, understanding and eloquence, which practise great matters of government of states, of letters, of arms and of divers affairs, ought not to be neglected, I suppose they may be used well enough in writing, such as have a grace and comeliness in the pronounciation even though they be not Tuscan. And I believe it ought not to be imputed to me for an error that I have chosen to make myself known rather for a Lombard, in speaking of Lombardy, than for no Tuscan in speaking too much Tuscan. For I have no knowledge in this their Tuscan tongue, so hard and secret; and I say that I have written it in mine own and as I speak; and, unto such as speak as I speak, and so I trust I have offended no man...

The good use of speech, therefore, I believe

ariseth of men that have witte, and, with learning, and practise, have gotten a good judgement, and with it consent and agree to receive the words they think good, which are known by a certain natural judgement, and not by art or by any manner rule; and because men are able to give no other reason but that they delite, and to the very sense of our ears it appeareth they bring a lief and a sweetness."

Even the greatest of modern Italian prose writers, Manzoni, habitually used the Milanese dialect when speaking with his family and intimate friends, and when the master did speak Italian his choice of language was like listening to the *Promessi Sposi*.

It may therefore not be amiss if I dwell for a moment on this aspect of Italian studies and on the contribution which Dante brought to its elucidation. Stripped of its accidental medieval vesture his treatise is remarkably modern in method and reasoning. True, Dante says the woman spoke first (which seems plausible) and traces the origin of separate languages to the Tower of Babel; but the Tower of Babel is only his way of

working back to a common starting point, much as we used to work back in Indo-European languages to the assumption of a mysterious Aryan race, of which we knew nothing, in Central Asia. Once however Dante leaves the land of Shinar he works on modern methods. He takes the three main divisions—Greek, Latin, Teutonic—which he says migratory folk brought from Asia to Europe. Dealing with the division he knows best, the Latin group, he shows how within living memory language has changed; that words die out and new ones arise; and that the operation of natural laws is sufficient to account for the diversity of the Latin dialects, and, inferentially, of language in general. Turning to the Italian dialects in *sì* he shows how they are divided by the chain of the Apennines into two main streams. He then deals in turn with each of the fourteen chief dialects. These he analyses, illustrates, criticises, and proves that no one of them can claim to be lord

over the others; most certainly the Tuscan cannot, although the infatuated Tuscans in their frenzy arrogate to themselves the claim. And not only the common people; even distinguished men have embraced this delusion. And since Tuscans exceed all others in their frenzied intoxication Dante proceeds to submit the Tuscan dialects—Florentine, Aretine, Sienese—to a searching test and concludes that, apart from some few Florentines, such as Guido, Lapo and another, who have recognised what the excellence of the vernacular consists in, almost all the Tuscans are obtuse as to the degradation of their dialect—*fere omnes in suo turpiloquio sint obtusi*. As for the Genoese if they were to lose the letter *z* they would either go dumb or need to invent another tongue. Crossing the leaf-clad shoulders of the Apennines Dante enters Romagna; and there owing to its softness a man speaking the effeminate Romagnese dialect would be taken for a woman as soon as he opened his mouth.

On the whole the Bolognese dialect is relatively the best and is a more beautiful speech than the others; and that, owing to its enrichment by borrowings from Imola, Ferrara and Modena—in fact by its being less of a dialect.

What then, he asks, is the Italian tongue? the illustrious Italian language we are hunting for? We declare, he concludes, that the illustrious, the cardinal, the courtly, the curial Italian vernacular language is that which belongs to all the cities of Italy but does not appear to belong to any one of them; and that by this Italian language all the provincial dialects are to be measured, compared and weighed. This then is the true and noble Italian tongue which is found partially in all dialects but wholly in none. This is the *vulgare latinum*, the quintessence, the sublimation of them all. It is the language used with more or less purity by the great poets of Italy irrespective of their native province.

Still, in spite of Dante and largely

due to him literary Italian is predominantly Tuscan. And since Florence came to be the centre of the literary, artistic and scientific life of Italy, and the great Italian poets, Dante's successors, Petrarch and Boccaccio, were Tuscans, the Italian language became coloured with the Tuscan idiom. Florentines and Sienese, says Goldoni, are the living texts of the good Italian language. To students of the language and dialects I commend this remarkable little treatise of Dante's and the *Idioma Gentile* of Edmondo de Amicis. True, it is the fashion of German philologists to scoff at De Amicis' *Plaudereien*. But since the rise of the brilliant school of native philologists, such as D'Ovidio, Ascoli and their pupils Parodi, Bartoli and others, German authorities are no longer taken in Italy at their own valuation.

It will have been obvious to you I hope during the progress of this very unacademic lecture that my aim has been to interest you both in classic and in

modern Italian subjects and to win your sympathy for the Italian people. For literature is not merely a thing of roots and derivations and morphologies. It is that; but it is something more. It is a vital, an organic thing; the manifestation of a people's spiritual being; the efflorescence of its culture. Now it would ill become me who have been suckled on Carlyle and nurtured on Goethe and Schiller; on Fichte, on Herder, and Lessing, and Gutzkow, to bring a railing accusation against teutonism in English literature. But undoubtedly the Freeman-cum-Carlyle set towards teutonism during the Victorian era was overdone, and I rejoice to think that the institution of an Italian Chair in Cambridge University is indicative of that happy reversion to our native Mediterranean springs, which your genial professor of English literature invoked here four years ago in his lectures on the lineage of English literature. It is a reaching back to the ancient mother; a refreshment and re-

plenishment in the storehouse of Latin ; a reinforcement of our humanistic traditions ; an exaltation of those *literae humaniores* for which Cambridge has ever been famous. For whatever else may be said of Italian studies and of the Italian language, this is incontrovertible — of all the daughters of the Latin tongue Italian is she who most resembles her mother. There never has been, as Carducci has shown us, any break between classical Roman and classical Italian literature.

One last word and I have done. At the decade of life when I take up this exacting task I cannot hope to do more than, with the aid of my colleagues in the Modern Languages School, to organise and direct Italian studies along lines that may lead to their winning a due place in the academic curriculum, and to stimulate the interest of the modern student in a language which by its growing importance in practical life, its potency as an instrument for intellectual and spiritual culture, rightly

claims to stand on an equality with any other modern language. And then—what shall I say? Well—let me say that *I know the story of Gil Blas and the archbishop of Granada* and that after me :—

Forse altri canterà con miglior plettro—
someone will sing you a better song.

